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September 15, 2004

To: Examiner Lyle Alexander, USPTO

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Re: Patent Application No. 09/972,160, Our Ref: ME-42

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Patent

ME-42

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: Urs Spitz, et al.
Serial No: 09/972,160
Filed: October 5, 2001
For: ANALYZER SYSTEM FOR LID-COVERED SAMPLE CONTAINERS
Examiner: Lyle Alexander
Art Unit: 1743

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313

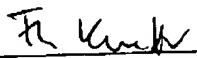
SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

S I R:

As requested by the Examiner, applicants submit herewith a discussion of each foreign language reference which was designated as being category X or category Y.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: September 15, 2004


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I, Friedrich Kueffner hereby certify that this correspondence (3 pages, including this page) is being transmitted by facsimile to (703) 872-9306 on September 15, 2004, addressed to Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks.

September 15, 2004


Friedrich Kueffner

1. DE 94 05 224 U1

An automatic analyzing apparatus is disclosed, which has carrying and transporting devices for different containers such as sample vials, containers for reagents, mixing containers and pipettes. The different containers are arranged on separate, turnable, circularly arranged carrying and transport devices, which carry or transport the containers towards a working station. These devices are arranged concentrically around the working station and can be moved together or individually around the station. Additionally the apparatus comprises an opening and closing device for the reagent containers. This opening and closing device operates by closing or opening some kind of gripping pliers around a protruding part of the container lid. These pliers are attached to a lever, so that the cap can be lifted from or put on the container. The apparatus further comprises a sensor, which analyses certain marks attached to the individual container receptions on the transporting device.

2. DE 43 19 081 C2

An apparatus for transporting samples to an analyzing device, especially to an x-ray analyzer, is disclosed. The apparatus comprises a sample tray with an array having a multitude of sample positions, whereby each position can accommodate one sample. One sample position is located near a gate, where the sample is discharged from the apparatus for further processing. The apparatus further comprises a handling system with a sampling device, which takes the samples off and puts the samples on a defined position. The sample tray is exchangeable and at least partially movable lengthwise, so that samples on positions outside the reach of the sampling device can be brought towards it. Depending on the kind of sample to be analyzed, different sampling devices can be used. The sampling device can for instance have gripping parts for grasping tablets or sample containers as well as having a kind of suction device, particularly for transferring light tablets. In another embodiment the sampling device comprises a magnet for handling ferromagnetic samples.

3. DE 198 51 501 C1

A sample changer for the computer controlled changing of ferromagnetic sample holders for an x-ray analyzer with a movable sample pickup device is disclosed. This pickup device comprises a device generating a magnetic field, whereby the sample holders are picked up magnetically at a first position in a first gripping or holding phase and put down at a second position during a deposition phase. By using an electromagnet the forces affecting the sample holder can be controlled and therefore different sample holders can be transferred. The sample holder can additionally be provided with a suction device, so that samples can be pneumatically sucked from the sample holder.

4. DE 11 88 882 B

This document discloses an upper container coupled via a transferring device to a second lower container for safely transferring the content of the upper into the lower

container. The transferring device is especially suited for transferring radioactive or other dangerous substances. The containers are specially designed and can be detachably locked together to perform this task. The upper container has a bottom lid lying on the bottom of the container, from where a tube like appendix protrudes into a sealing cup arranged underneath the upper container. The lower container has a lid which rim is engaged with another sealing cup arranged next to the lower container. These parts are designed in such a way, that when put together the upper sealing cup is engaged with the lower one. For tight sealing a special sealing material is used which can be softened or hardened for engaging or disengaging the containers, just as desired. The transferring is performed by opening the bottom lid of the upper container together with the lid of the lower container. Inside the tightly sealed upper container there is a movable magnet or electromagnet through which the opening and closing of the lids is controlled. To accomplish this task the upper lid is made of a magnetic material and the lower one contains a kind of permanent magnet or is partly made of soft iron. The electromagnet is brought into contact with the upper lid. By moving the magnet up again, both lids move into the upper container and connect the containers with each other. For closing the lids, the electromagnet can be discharged electrically or by interaction with the permanent magnet inside the lower lid.